# WALK THROUGH HISTORY

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### MAIN STREET BUSINESS DISTRICT

Beginning at the corner of Main Street and Pine Avenue, on the left at 200 W. Main Street you will find the **Bank of Inverness**. Built in 1916, the Citrus County Bank closed in 1929. The Brannen family has operated the Bank for over 80 years. Across the street at 114 W. Main Street, this structure was built by Citizen's Bank around 1912 and failed in the late 1920's. Later it was Vann's Drug Store, Bacon's Drug Store, Lanier's Drug Store, Culpepper's Drug Store, Bennett's Drug Store, Marshall's Drug Store, and for a period of time, the Inverness Bus Station. As a drug store with a soda fountain, it is remembered as the place to bring your "girl" to buy her an ice cream sundae or Coca-Cola. In the 1940's, Bennett's Drug Store also boasted a great cigar selection. It was later occupied by Damron's Auto Parts and numerous pub type eating establishments, and at present **Coach's Pub** operates here, as well as in the adjacent building.

The next building was built in the 1920's as a department store. In 1947, Owen Kennedy opened his "ready to wear" store and successfully operated it until 1986. For a period of time, Kennedy's was the only store in Inverness where you could buy women's and men's clothing. Mr. Kennedy also served as postmaster, city councilman, school board member, Citrus Memorial Hospital board member, and an original member of the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce, which recognized him as "man of the year". Later occupants were the Waterbed Store, C & D Gifts and then an addition to **Coach's Pub**.

110 W. Main Street was Allen's 5 & 10 Store. For 53 years George "Pop" Allen and his son operated the dime store. Open in 1932, the store supplied everything from hardware to stationary. Previous occupants include the Post Office, Vann's Drug Store & Ernest Johnston's Restaurant. After closing the 5 & 10, it has been a furniture store, Seaweed Sam's Restaurant, and now is known as **Stumpknocker's on the Square**.

Currently **Angelo's Pizza** at 108 W. Main Street, this was once an open-air market operated by the Scardasis family. The 3 parcels of property were purchased by Theodore Scardasis in 1920 where they sold fresh fruit, vegetables, bread, parched peanuts and penny candy. The building was constructed in 1927 where he operated a general store. In 1933, 2 of the spaces were rented to GM & Edna Richburg for a restaurant. After Mr. Scardasis died in 1937, Ms. Scardasis assumed control of the "Palace Café" restaurant, specializing in Florida style food by Elizabeth and Loretha, local cooks. The 3<sup>rd</sup> space was a bar/grill with a poolroom. John Croft came on Saturday evenings and sold boiled peanuts and fresh cold sugar cane juice from his truck. Air-conditioning was added to the buildings in the early 1960's. Previous businesses include Costa's Shoe Shop, Altenbergers' Shoes, Gouldbourn's Econowash, King's Bakery, First Federal Savings, Charlie's Restaurant, and now along with Angelo's it is a branch office of the Citrus County Chronicle.

The next section is 101, 103, & 105 Courthouse Square where Jack Reed built in the 1930's. Many businesses including West Coast Title Company, Robert Ritz Real Estate, a donut shop, Mildred's Beauty Shop, and the Western Auto Store, were here. The Title Company invited the whole town to come and listen to a Jack Dempsey/Gene Tunney boxing match on the radio – a big event since there were very few radios in the area at that time. Now you can visit **Pro H2O Filtration & Treatment, Affordable Coins & Stamps, Jagged Edge, and Ritzy Rags & Glitzy Jewels** in this section.

107 Courthouse Square was known as the Dampier Department Store from 1945—1967. The Dampier's were a pioneer family that became prominent business leaders in Inverness. This building was previously used as an auto store, carpet store, the Goodwill Store & Carolina Direct Furniture. It is now the Towne & Country All Wood Furniture Store. W.S. Warnock, who was founder of the Chronicle newspaper bought 109 Courthouse Square in 1908. The building was built and operated as City Savings Bank in 1910. It was a dry goods in the 1930's, In 1920, it was a commissary for the lumber mill across the street. It was sold in 1939 in a tax deed sale for \$17.26 after Wilson Plumbing was there. Paul Balasch & Kathleen ran a dry cleaners for years, with Kathleen serving on city council and was the 1st woman Mayor. The Deco Café operates from this building at the present.

Located at 115 Courthouse Square in the late 1940's was the Citizens Loan Company, owned and operated by Bill Keating. He was the driving force behind the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce, being its first president. Over the years, The Magic Brush, House of Beauty Salons, Gibbs Insurance Agency and Gill's Auctioneering have occupied this building. Now, the current business is **Budget Insurance**.

The last building located at 107 & 109 N. Apopka Avenue appears to have been built in the early 1920's. It was Carl Bellamy's Dry Cleaners, and then from 1936 until 1953, Snell & Louise Mills operated Sunshine Cleaners, with curb service and daily home delivery. A wood boiler made the steam for pressing. Edward Sasser purchased the building and ran the Sunshine Market and a commissary for the West Reaves Lumber Company. He was elected to serve on the 1st Inverness City Council from 1918-1951. This building is now used as a law office for Cliff Travis, Attorney.

Across North Apopka to the right of the new Courthouse, 203 Courthouse Square, is best remembered as the Citrus County Chronicle, established in 1891, and located here from 1922 to 1981. David Arthur's owned the building and was editor/publisher from 1964 to 1981. The Chronicle remains an integral part of Citrus County for reporting news to the citizens. After the Chronicle moved to 44E and then to Meadowcrest in Crystal River, several law offices have been here, and is currently Joyce's Courtside Pub.

It is at 205 Courthouse Square, you will find **John's Shoe Repair**. In the mid 1920's, the Merry family constructed the building and operated a jewelry store. In the early 1950's, Jean Roscow purchased it and her husband, John sold insurance, sold real estate, managed Western Union, and ran a travel agency. Since that time, it was a temporary library, law offices, and insurance agencies. 207 Courthouse Square is known as the **Valerie Theatre**. Built in the mid 1920's, it was owned by Mrs. PG Maddox and leased by Herbert Pittman of Clearwater when the "talkies" started replacing the silent movies. To compete with the Avalon Theatre on N. Apopka Avenue, the prices of a movie were cut to 10 cents for children & 25 cents for adults. In the late 1930's, Donald Giddens remembers someone releasing a skunk in the theatre during a movie! Margie Yoder Sanders remembers paying for a movie with a bag of rags when she did not have the cash. The City purchased this property in 2009, with plans to restore the building for future use.

Located at 209 Courthouse Square is where Frank Sanders built Peninsular Abstract Company around 1912. Richard "Dick" Kaufman bought the business and changed the name to Citrus Title, building a new building adjacent to this one in 1973. For a time, Connor's Office Supply rented the building. Mr. Kaufman was elected as a school board member, as well as serving several terms as a city councilman. The law firm of Bradshaw & Mountjoy bought the building from Mr. Kaufman

Crossing the lawn of the historic Courthouse to the opposite side, you will find 101, 103, & 105 W. Main Street. Built around 1915, this building has housed Thompson & Savary General Merchandise, Sasser's Dry Goods, Edgar Bellamy's Grocery Store for 19 years, Richburg Grocery Store for 40 years, Mary Scott's Restaurant – where people would often bring in their "catch/game" to be cooked; A & P Store, and Western Union. Recent businesses have included Computer Solutions, Country at Home, and Accents by Grace. The building housing Militello & Militello at 107 W. Main Street was built in 1911, and once housed Allen Hardware, Annie Savary Tooke Millinery, and Rayford Meeks Flowers & Meek's Boutique. Most recent businesses include Community Comfort Shoes. Subway is located on the first floor of the Masonic Building.

For the last of the historic buildings in the immediate downtown area, cross the street towards Coach's Pub, follow the sidewalk to the building just behind Coach's and you will find the Smoak & White Building at 109 *Pine Avenue*. This has been occupied by the Post Office, Richburg Grocery, and various businesses, and now **Ice Cream Dr**.

### MASONIC BUILDING

### HISTORIC DOWNTOWN TOUR GUIDE

Citrus Lodge #118, F and AM, was built at 95 S. Pine Street on the corner of Main Street and dedicated in 1910, and completed in January 1911. The costliest building in the county at the time, it was a splendid 3-story brick construction that cost \$17,285. Originally, the 1st floor housed 2 stores, the 2nd floor had 5 offices and the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor was the Lodge Room for the Masons and Eastern Star. After the dedication, between 1800-2500 people feasted on the picnic grounds at the end of Apopka Avenue, near the residence of W.H. Warnock. The town's coronet band played "Dixie" and other tunes. Walter F. Warnock, Sr., was worshipful master of the lodge at the time the temple was built. He also served as Clerk of Circuit Court and editor/proprietor of the Chronicle. Once, there was a movie theatre & City Hall on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor as well as professional offices, such as dentists, attorneys, etc. For many years, Hall's Drugstore occupied the 1st floor. In 1963, lightning struck causing fire damage. After restoration, it was sold to private enterprise.

OLD COURTHOUSE The old Citrus County Courthouse, now the Old Courthouse Heritage Museum, was constructed in 1912/13 for \$55,885, opening on June 3, 1912. The diamond shaped road layout presented a challenge to Tampa architect Willis R. Biggers. Using a Greek temple design, the corners of the building facing NE, SE, SW, and NW. It is the only courthouse in Florida set like this. Fireplaces were used to warm the building in the winter, and the tower clock cost \$800. During WW II, the tower was used to watch for enemy aircraft. Rooms were rented upstairs for \$5 to \$10 per month. Electricity came in 1913, and 36 electric lights were installed for \$248.50. In 1946, 1500 yards of dirt was removed from underneath the building to add a storage basement. This was the main government office until 1977. The upstairs courtroom continued to be used until 1992, when the ceiling fell in during a court hearing. It has recently been remodeled to look as it did in 1912. Elvis Presley filmed the movie, "Follow That Dream", in 1961. Restoration plans began in 1994. John Parks, a nationally known restoration architect had also developed plans for George Washington's Valley Forge. It took \$2.5 million and 7 years to complete, and today this national register site houses several galleries. Don't miss the great seal on the floor, which wrongly depicts a brave instead of a maiden.

### COCA-COLA BUILDING

The All-American drink was introduced to Citrus County in the early 1900's. W.T. Baxley acted as a sub-bottler to the Tampa Coca Cola Bottling Company, and began bottling it in Hernando in 1906. Empty bottles were washed in Hernando Lake, then filled and transported by horse drawn wagon to Inverness. In 1914, World War I was underway in Europe, and the phosphate mines in Hernando started closing. W.T. Baxley then moved his building and business to Inverness behind his home at 110 N. Pine Street. After Mr. Baxlev's death on December 29, 1931, Mrs. Pearl Baxlev headed the operation in this brick building at 112 N. Apopka Avenue. In 1933, the Inverness plant bought the Brooksville territory. Mrs. Baxley died in May of 1960 at 85, and son, Carey Baxley, and daughter, Ina Lee Baxley Green, continued the business. In the early years, it would take a year to use a 50-gallon barrel of syrup, producing around 250 cases a year - of course, it developed into a thriving and prosperous business. The family business and building were sold to Florida Coca-Cola in 1979, with the County purchasing the building from Coca-Cola in 1983. This site was dedicated with a historic plaque on October 20, 2000.

# Mt. CARMEL CHURCH

Jar I The Reverend A.L. Dutch, Deacon Arthur Bell and the entire membership of Shialo Baptist Church from Stage Pond, Florida, organized the Mount Carmel Baptist Church in 1894. The present sanctuary at 122 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave. was erected in 1923 as a concrete block rectangular church building with "no heat" under the leadership of Reverend L.T. Thompson, one of 15 ministers that have pastored this church. "Greater" was added to the official church name on September 3, 1983. A historic plaque was presented in October, 2010.

### McLEOD HOUSE

Built around 1915, this house at 207 Apopka Avenue is most remembered as the McLeod house. Oscar Penn McLeod obtained a teaching certificate in 1918 and married Mayo Artie Reams at the Greenville Baptist Pastorium, Greenville, Florida, on September 8, 1918. The family lived there from 1941-1998. He furthered his education leading to a CPA degree. After the move to Inverness in 1927, he was a bookkeeper for local businesses and Work Projects Administration (WPA). In the 1940's he was appointed auditor for the State's Attorney General's office, then worked for John Ringling North of Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Circus of Sarasota until his death. He served as a school trustee in Citrus County and raised 12 children here—10 boys & 2 girls. For 28 years there was a McLeod boy on the Citrus High School football team - Coach Walt Connors described them as born athletes! Many Citrus County children remember going to the McLeod House - there was always someone to play . O.P. died in 1947 and Mayo died in 1982. The property was purchased by Richard and Sandra Dixon in 1999. Photos of all 12 McLeod children hang in the foyer of the house. At the time of the plaque dedication in October 2004, , it was a French restaurant "Chateau Chansezz". Now, the McLeod House Bistro.

R.O. HICKS HOME

In 1900, Robert O. Hicks built this house at 214 W. Tompkins St. after coming to Citrus County from Tennessee in 1886. The house was uniquely designed with an octagonal roof with the belief that it could weather hurricanes, and is possibly the oldest home remaining. The only

changes have been the addition of the front porch & 2 bathrooms. The high-ceiling living room, dining room, and kitchen have remained unaltered. It was constructed of solid heart of pine lumber and surrounded by original fence. Members of the Hicks family have lived in the house since. Bessie Hicks taught elementary school for many years. The Hicks family continues to operate a successful orange grove in the city near the Gospel Island Bridge. Now its the Chamber of Commerce.

# BALL OF

### JK KELLEY HOUSE (BUTT'S HOUSE)

J.K. and Bonnie Kelley were married in Inverness on November 26, 1902. In 1903, James Keels Kelley built this two- story, wood frame, colonial, revival-style home at 410 W. Main St. The beautiful verandah, was best for socializing on warm summer evenings. According to a 1936 Citrus Co. Chronicle article, Mr. Kelley was a County Commissioner (when Citrus & Hernando were one county), and a school board member. He was also a mason, and an elder in the First Presbyterian Church, where his wife was a charter member. He served on the Inverness City Council from 1923 to 1927, and best remembered for management of a turpentine still at the southern end of town. Prisoners were leased from the State as laborers in some stills. For a period of time, Mrs. Kelley operated "The Palm Rest Tourist Home" here, which was probably when the sunrooms were added on the east side of the second floor. Mr. and Mrs. Kelley lived here until Edward and Margaret Butts purchased it in 1961, coming from Paducah, Kentucky with their two children. They thought of Inverness as "The Garden of Eden". Mr. and Mrs. Butts, and later their son Mike, operated the Shell Gas Station across the street for 40 years, and witnessed changes to Main Street from a sleepy little town to a busy 4-lane commercial area. Edward Butts died in 1997, and his son, Mike continues to run a tire and vehicle mainte-

nance business in the area. This home as one of the few remaining on Main Street.



# **WOMAN'S CLUB**

This building at 311 W. Main Street was constructed in the early 1900's as a library. Schools Superintendent R.L. Turner later used it until the 1912 Courthouse was constructed and his office moved there in 1917. The Woman's Club of Inverness was formed. It was enlarged in 1922, paid off in 1926, then a library. The Kiwanis Club, chartered in 1925, was also housed here in 1925/26, and the Woman's Club served lunch to the Kiwanis members to raise funds in the early 1960's. The library was moved and became a branch of the Central Florida Regional Library System. During WWI, the women rolled bandages for the Red Cross, knitted sweaters, scarves & lay covers. They planted oak trees at the grammar school, naming them for Inverness boys in the Armed Services. The Junior/Senior Prom was held here in 1945. The Inverness  $\label{thm:continuous} \mbox{Woman's Club organized the first PTA in Citrus County, and furnished a room in the} \\$ late 1950's for the new Citrus Memorial Hospital. Community services included meals on wheels, Citrus United Basket, Inverness Care Center, Hacienda Girl's Ranch, Girl and Boy Scouts, Red Cross, Cancer Society, Heart Association & All Children's Hospital. George Derewenko & Linda Bega purchased the building in

1999. It is currently Landmark Realty.

GEORGE CARTER HOUSE In 1903, this house was built for George

Carter, Citrus County's 3rd Sheriff at 301 W. Main Street. The house was the first in Inverness to have a bathroom and was one of the first 13 buildings to be "wired up" when electricity came to Citrus County in 1913. Reportedly, the Governor suspended Sheriff Carter and launched an investigation of alleged misconduct accusing the Sheriff in not preventing the lynching of a black man who was accused of, but not tried for, the killing of local man, Robert Russell. His removal caused such uproar among the citizens, who felt he had been unfairly treated; the Governor later reinstated him. Clinton D. Shultz, who partnered with J.L. Connell in the agriculture and mining business, raised his family here. Mr. Shultz's daughter, fondly remembered as "Miss Virginia" married long-time County Clerk of Courts, Francis "Cowboy" Williams. The Mitchell's later owned the house, offering room and board. It was then purchased and restored by George & Carol Derewenko and Joe & Linda Bega in 1986. In 2003, it was dedicated with a historic plaque.

CROWN HOTEL

In the early 1920's, the Orange Hotel was originally located on the NE corner of W. Main Street and Seminole Avenue. At one time, it was a boarding house & commissary, operated by Francis Dampier, Sr. Later the 2-story building was moved to 109 N. Seminole Avenue by cutting it in half, raising it and setting it on a newly constructed 1st floor, creating a 3-story hotel. The 1926 Citrus High School Junior-Senior banquet was held here. Eva Holden operated her beauty shop on the 1st floor and Charles B. Fitzpatrick ran his law office here. Hampton Dunn's book, "Back Home" notes that in 1957 a bountiful breakfast of ham, bacon or sausage, 2 eggs, toast and coffee was 60 cents, and lunch of 2 meats, 3 vegetables, bread, butter and a beverage for 87 cents. Only 22 years old, "Aunt Tom" Scott purchased the hotel, and after58 years sold it to an Auburndale businessman, Lynwood N. Smith in 1959. It was renamed the Colonial Hotel and later became the Crown Hotel when English investors refurbished the building in 1981. Jill & Nigel Sumner purchased and operated the hotel from 1990 to 2001. It is now the Crown Court, for assisted living.